



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Boost Mid-Michigan Event for Entrepreneurs, Supporters
And Investors Proved Valuable to All**
Polished Pitches Now Ready for Seasoned Investor Review

Midland, MI (September 21, 2009) – The air was electric in Curtis Hall at Saginaw Valley State University September 10 as nearly 100 entrepreneurs, investors and business people from across Michigan gathered for the first-ever “Boost Mid-Michigan” event. The event, hosted by the BlueWater Angels and launched by “Jumpstart,” a collaborative effort of 17 organizations promoting entrepreneurship, provided a progressive, unique format for learning, growth and opportunities for all.

With grant money from the Mott Foundation, entrepreneurial support groups came together like never before to create the event which drew participants from across the state. Said Diane Durance, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Entrepreneur’s Quest (GLEQ), “It was wonderful and amazing that we brought 17 difference organizations together to create this unique event to serve entrepreneurs in Michigan.”

At Boost Mid-Michigan, nearly 30 entrepreneurs presented their stories in two minutes or less. After each presentation, a panel of experts and other supporters asked questions then voted and completed comment cards to rank each presenter and provide valuable feedback. Presenters got lots of specific feedback and were encouraged to continue to perfect and polish their business pitches.

“Michigan needs a real jumpstart, and this ‘Boost Mid-Michigan’ event brought together all the right people to pick up the pace of entrepreneurship and investment here in our state. The BlueWater Angels were honored to host the event and I know it will help bring even more solid investment in the region,” says Chris Moultrup, BlueWater Angels Associate Director.

“We are pleased with the approach and how it helps entrepreneurs to develop solid, focused overviews of their businesses – so impressed, in fact, that the BlueWater Angels are committed to hosting Boost Mid-Michigan events throughout the region on a quarterly basis in 2010,” Moultrup concluded.

One presenter was Dr. Alice Brown, founder of In The Groove, a company that developed a knee brace for medial lateral knee pain that gives pain relief, improved mobility and rehabilitates the knee just by wearing it. She felt the program motivated and educated all who participated. “Michigan needs more programs like this to not only give Michigan companies much needed exposure, but also to encourage others to succeed and follow their dreams,” Brown said.

And from the supporting participants, Joel Rash, Manager of LAUNCH, University Outreach at U of M Flint commented, “The diversity of the pitches, the range of concepts, and the quality of the business ideas was

tremendous. These weren't amateurs fumbling through their first attempt; these were innovative and experienced entrepreneurs who are on the verge of creating ventures that will generate jobs and income for our region."

The Basic Approach

The goal of Boost Mid-Michigan is to identify Michigan entrepreneurs and match them with the services they need to "put their best foot forward" when meeting and presenting to investors. From the mid-September event, the top 12 of those presenting are now invited to prepare full presentations for the BlueWater Angels who are holding their next "Pitch Night," by screened invitation, in mid-October.

The process for Boost Mid-Michigan was simple, informal and an adventure in networking for all:

1. **The Groups** – The masses assembled and networking began.
 - a. **Entrepreneurs** signed up, prepared two-minute pitches on their business or idea, practiced and presented their stories.
 - b. **Interested service professionals** and **entrepreneurial support organizations** (like universities, the GLEQ, and business incubators and accelerators) gathered and gave supportive ideas and constructive feedback.
 - c. **The formal panel** of experts prepared to learn about new ventures, coach the entrepreneurs to help them improve.
2. **The Pitch** – Each of the entrepreneurs gave a two-minute business proposition and received feedback from the expert panel.
3. **The Evaluation** – All panel members and attendees provided comments and shared insights to give helpful feedback to entrepreneur presenters.
4. **The Winners** – Two of the presenters were selected to join the expert panel for dinner and continued dialog.

Truly all participants were "winners" who embody the entrepreneurial spirit, but the top winners from the premier Boost Mid-Michigan event were:

- **Mike Tarasev – Blaze Medical Devices** (mtarasev@umich.edu) / (734) 883-4024)

Mike represented himself and his business partner, Ken Alfano, in presenting Blaze Medical Devices where they are developing lab instruments to measure red blood cell fragility to improve the effectiveness of blood transfusions, giving the patient the maximum benefit.

"This was a very interesting format and a great opportunity to tell your story to a new set of people from outside your area," said Tarasev, who lives and works in the Ann Arbor area.

His advice to other entrepreneurs interested in events like Boost Mid-Michigan, "Go and tell your story. Tell people what you are doing and become very proficient at quickly, interestingly telling the people. And then – very important – listen to their reactions, listen to their questions and learn from it all!"

- **Cason Thorsby – Wild Game Soup Company** (thors1cc@cmich.edu) / (810) 964-7687)

CMU grad student and business development manager at CMU-Research Corporation presented his business plans for canned soup with a healthful, wild game recipe at a competitive price. It's an innovation to the soup industry, he says.

"The format was bitter-sweet," Thorsby said. "With only two minutes, you need to really know your opportunity and what makes it unique. And you need to think about what those investors need to hear."

Thorsby plans to present Wild Game Soup Company investment opportunities in more depth at the next BlueWater Angels pitch night, and expects there will be interested investors to help lift the plan into a product on the shelf.

With a broad range of attendees, the networking and collaborating was at an all time high. The concept of holding a special event designed to raise the bar and improve business proposals through networking is unique. It brought together the best in entrepreneurial support, the most motivated entrepreneurs, and investors poised to dig deep to support growth and investment in Michigan.

According to BlueWater Angel Terry Duperon, of Duperon Corporation, “The insightful feedback and coaching of participants will certainly result in more confident and prepared prospects for us as potential investors. We are looking forward to hearing more about the opportunities, and I’m sure the entrepreneurs – *really all* ‘winners’ – feel much more prepared. This, in turn, helps us determine viability of their ventures.”

For the top 12 entrepreneurial presenters of the night, they now have the opportunity to make a full presentation to the BlueWater Angels at the October 14 reviewing meeting. And for the remaining brave and inspired entrepreneurs who presented at Boost Mid-Michigan, the next step is to refine their approaches, practice and consider participating in the next Boost Mid-Michigan event later in the year. For further information, visit the Web site at www.bluewaterangels.com or contact Chris Moultrup at (989) 839-2336.

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Media Background Information:

BlueWater Angels (www.bluewaterangels.com)

BlueWater Angels, LLC, has a significant amount of capital available to invest in promising companies on an annual basis. Their governing board and officers include representation from multiple Michigan counties:

Officers:

Chairman Emeritus	Arnold Allemang (Midland County)
President	Ken Kousky (Leelanau and Saginaw Counties)
Treasurer	Paul Murray (Isabella County)
Secretary	John Bartos (Midland County)

Additional board members:

John Billingham	Midland County
Ted Skinner	Midland County
John Strobel	Saginaw County
Ken Van Der Wende	Midland County

Membership is based on application, and includes a select group of high net worth individuals and organizations interested in investing capital in promising companies with the expectation of receiving a substantial return on their investment(s). Entrepreneurs seeking investment and investors seeking membership in a formalized angel group are encouraged to contact Chris Moultrup, Associate Director, at (989) 839-2336 or visit us online at www.bluewaterangels.com.

Angel Investment Networks

An angel investment is a vehicle for young, smart, high-growth start-up firms to raise seed capital to bring their business ideas to fruition on a scale large enough to interest investors and enhance an area’s economy. Originally the term “angel” was used to describe wealthy individuals who provided money for theatrical productions in 19th century England. While the return on those investments may have been another curtain call, today an angel’s return can be a considerable financial gain.

In 1996 there were 10 angel investment organizations around the country. Today there are more than 250 angel organizations nationwide. This community-oriented investment model has proven to be successful for investors, start-up firms and regional economies. The Angel Capital Association (www.angelcapitalassociation.org) is the nation's authority on all aspects of angel investment and has been a key partner with MMIC and BlueWater Angels to launch the investment group.

MidMichigan Innovation Center (www.mmic.us)

BlueWater Angels operates out of the MidMichigan Innovation Center, a private, non-profit organization created to provide entrepreneurs and start-up companies with a supportive and collaborative environment. MMIC connects entrepreneurs with critical resources, valuable services, flexible facilities, and entrepreneurial training and education that will help them develop their business ventures.

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a collaborative effort by entrepreneurial support organizations to accelerate the development of high-growth and technology ventures in mid-Michigan. As part of the Moving Ideas to Market (MI2M) initiative sponsored by the C.S. Mott Foundation, it's administered by the Prima Civitas Foundation in partnership with Corporation for a Skilled Workforce.

Collaborating partner organizations for *Boost Mid-Michigan* included: Bay Future, Blue Water Angels, Central Michigan University, Davenport University, Kettering University, Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest, Leap, Michigan Small Business Technology Development Centers (MI-SBTDC), Michigan State University, Midland Tomorrow, Mid-Michigan Innovation Team, MidMichigan Innovation Center, Northwood University, Saginaw Future, Saginaw Valley State University, and University of Michigan - Flint.

Contact Information for Quoted Participants

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